

WYCOMBESTEAL

LUCKY

VICTORY

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 3, Staines Town 2

WYCOMBE Wanderers, 2-0 up after 18 minutes and cruising, saw their lead eroded by half time and then had to withstand heavy pressure from Staines Town before a late goal by Howard Kennedy gave them a rather lucky win in the Rothmans Isthmian League on Tuesday night.

Staines, totally outplayed for the 1st 20 minutes, hit back superbly with two brilliant goals and could have had two or three more in the second half when they hit the post and had shots cleared off the line. Rarely did Wanderers look like taking the three points until Kennedy flashed home an 84th minute drive.

Staines, and their supporters, must have been shattered after giving one of their best performances of the season. They certainly looked the best side seen at Loakes Park this season and with a shade more fortune, they would have sewn this game up in the second half. But 'Lady Luck' smiled on the Blues again—as she did at Enfield on Saturday.

Fortunate though they undoubtedly were, Wanderers deserve full praise for sticking to their guns and their display was all the more creditable when one considers that three of Saturday's team—plus John Maskell—were ruled out through injury. Tony Horseman, Gavin Fraser and Paul Birdseye all out of action.

Their replacements certainly played their part and I thought right back Mick Sorenson did a particularly fine job. Every one of the back four were given a severe testing by John Ritchie, whose control and speed almost brought him goals on two of three occasions. His old striking partner, Peter Cruse, was also dangerous in midfield.

IMMACULATE

The Loakes Park pitch looked immaculate when the players kicked off and although the drizzle had made the surface slippery, the bounce of the ball was true and gave Wanderers every opportunity to show their paces. They did just that after only three minutes with the first goal.

Ian Pearson held the ball near the bye-line on the top wing and then crossed on the left foot after beating Tom McCready and Brendan O'Sullivan. Staines left their far post unmarked and Kennedy was there to tuck the ball home from six yards.

A lovely body swerve by Holfield, which sent a pack of defenders the wrong way, gave him room for an 11th minute shot which was deflected for a corner and to cap a great start by Wanderers; they went 2-0 up after 18 minutes. Former Wycombe man Roy Williams brought down Alan Davies five yards outside the box

and while Davies was receiving treatment, the Blues had over a minute to work out their free kick. They used the time wisely, too. Kennedy touched the ball to Pearson whose left foot shot curled into the net, taking a slight deflection on the way.

This 2-0 lead was the result of some of the best attacking play seen from the Blues this term. Pearson, Davies and Holfield all took players on and showed the ability to beat them while by using their overlapping full backs, Wanderers stretched Staines wide and opened up flaws in the back four. It was the positive approach to the game which earned their lead.

Unfortunately they couldn't maintain the pace and Staines, waiting patiently to get their game together, were rewarded with two fine goals to level before half time. The first came on the half hour when Cruse received the ball on half way. He played a 1-2 with Reggie James, then exchanged passes with Arthur Rowlands. This split Wycombe's defence completely and Cruse ran through and lazily beat Peter Spittle with the perfect finishing shot.

Holfield almost put Wanderers 3-1 up when his shot beat Frank Parsons but skimmed past the far post but the Cruse goal had injected new life into the visitors. They equalised in the 38th minute. Kennedy lost possession and sent the ball into the path of Peter Beasant, some 25 yards from goal. Beasant unleashed a thunderous first time shot that flew into the back of the net.

Staines carried on where they left off after half time while Wanderers lost their rhythm and confidence. They tried to slow the game down and build attacks slowly but the impatient crowd were quick to barrack any backward passes. In the end Wanderers got it going again but for much of the half they were on the defensive.

By making themselves first to the ball, Staines dominated play and only poor finishing and ill luck stopped them scoring. First chance came in the 50th minute when Spittle somehow managed to block shots from Williams and James on the line in a hectic scramble.

Then in the 64th minute Rowlands, playing his 200th game, drove in a shot from 18 yards which Sorenson touched onto his own upright with Spittle helpless. Several times Ritchie left defenders in his wake by sheer speed

and in the 77th minute only a brilliant save from Spittle prevented a certain goal.

RITCHIE BURST

Ritchie was the man who created the danger with a burst over 20 yards. He beat both Bob Davies and Alan Phillips before firing a six yard shot which Spittle somehow pushed up into the air. With Staines players rushing in, Sorenson more than earned his keep by clearing off the line.

Then in the 83rd minute, as so often happens when one side is dominating, the other broke away to score. Previously Wycombe had been trying hopeful pot shots, mainly from Priestley, but these seldom bothered Parsons. Then Dylan Evans tried his luck from the edge of the box and saw his drive strike a defender and spin out to Kennedy. Howard had a second to get in his shot but made no mistake by hammering the ball past the keeper from eight yards. Parsons got a touch—but the power of the shot beat him.

Once ahead again, Wanderers showed they were in no mood to surrender their lead and with Priestley tackling fiercely in midfield, they held on for their points.

While feeling for Staines, Wanderers know they must ride their luck when it's going. One thing's for sure—it won't last forever!

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, M. Sorenson (sub D. Bullock 87 mins), K. Mead, A. Phillips, R. Davies, A. Davies, J. Priestley, H. Kennedy, I. Pearson, D. Evans, M. Holfield.

STAINES: F. Parsons, G. Talbot, R. Williams, T. McCready, B. O'Sullivan, P. Beasant, P. Cruse, T. Shaw, E. James (sub J. McMoyn 77 mins), J. Ritchie, A. Rowlands.

Referee: V. McGowan (London).

Half time: 2-2. **Goalscorers:** Wycombe—Kennedy 2 (3, 83), Pearson (18). Staines—Cruse (30), Beasant (38).

Attendance: 1,300.

ROTHMANS ISTHMIAN LEAGUE DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leatherhead	8	7	1	0	17	4	22
Dagenham	8	6	1	1	16	9	18
Hitchin	8	5	2	1	11	7	17
Tooting	8	5	1	2	22	11	16
Wycombe	8	5	0	3	13	12	15
Barking	8	4	1	3	17	13	13
Enfield	7	3	3	1	7	12	12
Southall	8	4	0	4	12	12	12
Hayes	7	3	2	2	9	7	11
W'stow	8	3	2	3	8	7	11
Sutton	8	3	2	3	11	11	11
Slough	8	3	2	3	7	8	11
Croydon	7	3	1	3	7	7	10
Woking	8	3	1	4	9	9	10
Staines	8	3	0	5	7	9	9
Bishops	8	3	0	5	10	13	9
L'stone	8	2	2	4	13	12	8
Hendon	8	2	1	5	7	12	7
Quivich	8	1	3	4	12	12	6
Kings	7	1	2	4	8	10	5
Tilbury	8	1	2	5	3	11	5
Ilford	8	0	1	7	3	17	1